

The Law of Liberty



PRESIDENT
HENRY CHURCHILL KING

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THE LAW OF LIBERTY

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BY

PRESIDENT
HENRY CHURCHILL KING
D.D., LL.D.

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The Law of Liberty

"Faith working through love."

"For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another."—Gal. 5:6 and 13.

I *The Fundamental Nature of the Problem.*

It would seem a profanation to take this last hour of college counsel for a trivial theme. Only the greatest themes befit this time. I bring you, therefore, today, a fundamental problem, a perennial problem, a problem that has occupied men since they began to ponder spiritual issues; a problem with which great thinkers in philosophy and morals and religion have been engaged; a problem that still has to do with the very essence of life for every earnest man; and a problem peculiarly demanding to be rethought, just now—the problem of liberty and law.

My theme—The Law of Liberty—states a paradox; but it is a paradox that men have always to solve. How can I have liberty without license? How can I enthrone the law of righteousness in my life without legalism? How can I accept the redemption of religion, of divine grace, and still keep a character genuinely my own? These are questions both profound and intensely practical.

How difficult men have found the solution of this problem, the whole spiritual history of the race bears witness. It is the problem of prophet and priest in Judaism; the problem of faith and works and antinomianism in the New Testament; the problem of justification by faith in the Reformation; the problem of the Ethics of Kant, with its insistence on self-legislation; the problem of Nietzsche—to name no other; the problem of “free lovers” of all kinds and times; and, in one form, the problem of democracy itself—the problem of self-government. It is the great life problem that Christ believed himself to have solved.

We may well take our start from

the New Testament; for all the elements of the problem are there illustrated:—Judaistic legalism and antinomianism; the beginnings of mediæval asceticism and mysticism; the anxieties of those who have seen the doctrines of the free grace of God and of salvation by faith abused; the other anxieties of those who see Christianity becoming only another legalism; and, soaring above all, the expression of the abounding life of free children of the Heavenly Father.

No fewer than five books of the New Testament are directly and primarily occupied with this theme: Galatians and Romans, whose watchword is "For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage"; James, which sounds the warning, "Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself"; and Second Peter and the curious little book of Jude, that are warning against a licentious antinomianism. Indeed, the phrase of my theme is caught up out of one of these controversial books, James, and my text out of another, Galatians.

The authors of James, Second Peter and Jude have seen the great doctrines of justification by faith, of salvation by grace, of the free forgiveness of God, and of Christian liberty, made an excuse for licentious absence of character, and are calling men back to the insistent ethical test in religion: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves."

Paul in Galatians and Romans has seen all freedom and joy, not only, but all inner righteousness, and all grace and beauty of character, so sapped by a hard and haughty legalism, that he glories in the deliverance that Christ has brought from legal bondage; and his great words are inevitably, faith, and love, and grace, and forgiveness, and liberty. These were ideas too great for his generation rightly to grasp, and their abuse produced a reaction to a new legalism that tainted Christianity for dreary years. But to Paul it was inconceivable that faith, and love, and grace, and forgiveness and liberty, should mean license. The trust and the love called out by the matchless gracious

personal revelation of God in Christ stirred new powers in him, and held him to a grateful and quenchless ambition for such a life as Christ's, and brought him victory where before he had failed. The free grace and forgiveness of a holy God, such as Christ's life portrayed, could but mean that God was pledged to co-operate with him in the attainment of a life worthy of a child of God. Like Christ, he himself found his highest liberty in devotion to his Father's will. No man, he was sure, could really be drawn to Christ and not become like him—not by painful legal performances, but by the healthful contagion of Christ's own spirit.

Paul had caught, thus, a new vision of God's purpose concerning men. He had come to see that men were not made to be petty egoists, shut up within the narrow walls of their own separate selves, but that they were created on so large a plan that they could not come to their best independently either of one another or of God,—that they were made in every fiber of their beings for such fellowships. To hold back from these fellowships

was to insure defeat. It was an utterly false and mistaken pride, therefore, that in one's struggle for character shut the door on other lives, human and divine, which were really part and parcel of one's self.

II. *Why, now, does this problem of liberty and law, so clearly resolved in the New Testament still, so constantly recur?*

Let us stop a moment to make plain how absolutely essential both freedom and character, both law and liberty are, and how vital to all satisfying life is the inner meaning of both contentions.

What, in the first place, is law at bottom—all law that ultimately a man ought to obey? It is intended, evidently, to secure a society united in the pursuit of certain great common goods; it is *a way of life*:—a way that the experience of the race indicates that it is desirable for the common good of all that all men follow; a way so good that it is felt to be embodied in our natures as the will of our Creator for us, and therefore a way of life.

When human law or custom be-

comes something else, when it serves no common good; when it will not bear the test of racial experience; when we cannot believe it represents a true *ought*, or a true interpretation of the will of God, it thereby loses all authority as law, and the ethical law in the true sense abrogates the law falsely so called. Not all revolt against existing law, therefore, is lawlessness. Many a smug but dire injustice is hidden under law. The insistent and eternal demand for character is the demand for obedience to a law that can be conceived to be the will of an all-loving God. Now to try to get away from that law is to flee from life, for it is an attempt to get away from one's own highest ideal. That is not to come into larger life, but to take ultimately all self-respect and dignity and worth out of living. The demand for liberty too frequently forgets that some sphere of order and law is essential to give freedom itself any value, and so it turns its revolt against *a* law into a revolt against law itself; its revolt against a particular form of order, into a revolt against all order.

There is a widespread menacing tendency in all spheres of our modern life—the tendency to forget that self-control is a prime condition of everything worth while in life. “Letting oneself go” is a good road to nothing except insanity. There is much talk of so-called “personal liberty,” that really means liberty to debauch the community, liberty to make conditions far harder for both personal and social progress.

But the very fact that conceptions of law can so change; that imperfect, developing men can at one stage find the preservation of a common good in a law that later seems to them a hindrance to growth and to larger life, itself illustrates and justifies the perennial demand for liberty. Conditions change. Men develop. New ideals arise. Readjustment is imperative. What adjustment, is always the question.

All men agree that in seeking to attain a common good there must be no unnecessary interference with the freedom of the individual. Institutions, the state, the law itself, all ultimately exist for the greater good

of individual citizens. Too heavy a price in individual freedom may easily be paid for a well recognized common good.

But the justification of the demand for liberty lies much deeper than this. The one thing that the individual has to give to the common good is himself, his fully realized possibilities. But this complete self-realization is also his own individual highest good. From both points of view, therefore, there is required the freedom for the individual to develop his largest possibilities, and this requires something more than selfish self-will. And law—the expressed will of the whole community—must often come in, not to hinder, but to preserve this freedom of the individual, his full initiative—to protect the individual against the unwarranted aggressions of others. The community suffers wherever any individual citizen has not the liberty to make his full contribution to the common life. From this angle it is hardly too much to say that law itself exists to insure the highest and largest liberty to the individual.

But the demand for liberty has a

still deeper source. A man is not truly a man unless he has an inner life of his own; freedom of thought, freedom of investigation, freedom to be himself in his inmost life. Character cannot be laid upon him from without. He must see for himself and choose for himself. A fundamentally good society, therefore, is not a society in which every wrong act is forbidden by law and prevented by an omniscient and omnipotent police force, but a society in which men choose for themselves obedience to the highest ideals they have seen. But this requires liberty at every step, as well as the developing power of law. The great aim of human life and society is to develop free men who choose the right, not to get a certain sort of external conduct. God, himself, counts this free choice of the right so infinite in value as to be worth the terrible price of all the sin and suffering which the abuse of men's freedom has brought into the world. He has given men no play freedom, but a freedom terribly real. And human society in all its lawmaking may

never forget the eternal need of freedom.

In the solution of this constant paradox of liberty and law, men must therefore learn patience with men; patience with the blunderers of the race; patience with its born legislators; patience with its born rebels; patience with its common men fighting their way slowly to character; patience with its geniuses and prophets, with their new and sudden visions; for both law and liberty must be kept, both character and freedom.

The constant recurrence of the problem of liberty and law will be understood also when we see that this problem is at bottom the problem of the radical and the conservative, and the problem of "absolute natural right," on the one hand, and of "historic legitimate right," on the other; the problem of justice to the past and of justice to the present and future. And all are represented at any time in society by the members of three generations. But just as a sphere of law is necessary to give meaning to freedom, and just as the preservation of freedom of initiative must be

the very aim of law; so the radical and conservative at bottom have similar goals. The radical does not wish to root up all the past, but only the evil and the ineffective for good as he conceives it; but he recognizes that in thus rooting up the faulty he is certain to sacrifice much else. The conservative does not wish to preserve all the past, but only all the good of the past; but he recognizes that in preserving all of the good he is certain to keep, in the structure of society, much evil also. Each believes he preserves a balance of good by his method; and this balance of good is the real aim in both cases.

Like the differences between the advocates of law and liberty, the differences between the radical and the conservative are to a large extent temperamental. They go back finally probably to the fundamental paradox of the inner life—docility and initiative, self-surrender and self-assertion. Character in the large sense, as I have elsewhere said, “requires both self-assertion and self-surrender, both individuality and deference, both the assertion of a law for oneself and the

reasonable yielding to others, both loyalty to conviction and open-mindedness, both free independence and obedience."

And for all social progress, in like manner, both temperaments represent indispensable human needs. For any solid and enduring social progress there must be historical continuity, on the one hand, and constant readjustment on the other. We do not live in a static world; we are not static beings. We are always in process. A blind conservatism and a blind radicalism are both therefore impossible. To keep even the good of the past in new conditions requires adjustment. To get rid of even the most certain evils of the past requires that the new method or custom shall be fitted into what men have already attained. *Free spontaneity in obedience to constantly bettering ideals*,—this must be the goal of both radical and conservative; of defenders both of liberty and of law.

III. Let us ask, then, once again,—How did the New Testament writers conceive the solution of this problem? Have we modern men of

the twentieth century any better solution? All five of those New Testament books, which are occupied with the problem of law and liberty, seek to show how one may attain character and avoid legalism; how he may keep freedom of life and be true to the highest standards. They aim to point the way to definite growth in character, as necessarily involved in the very idea of the Christian life. Can we penetrate their solution?

Both theme and text suggest the lines on which this paradox of the moral and religious life may be solved. The passage in James that contains my theme runs, you will remember, in this fashion: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall

be blessed in his doing" (James 1:22-25). Here, plainly, there has come to the writer an illuminating insight into the meaning of any true law of God. It is a law of a man's own being, a revealing to him of the lines along which life lies. The perfect law is a law of liberty, because it is the law of one's own being truly discerned and stated. In obeying this inner law of his own nature one has liberty, the only true liberty, and is "blessed" thereby. Such a law simply states the true self which we are to realize. We can have freedom only in developing toward the goal involved in our inmost natures. Here is freedom to follow the most fundamental trends of our natures, and here, too, is the character that grows out of fulfilled ideals. The conception is identical with the new conception which modern science suggests of the laws of nature, as not hindrances to life but as ways to conquest and larger life.

James here starts from the side of law, but Paul, starting from the side of the inner freedom, reaches essentially the same conclusion. "For in

Christ Jesus," he says, "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love." "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Paul, too, shows that he has had a flash of illumination lighting up the whole paradox of law and liberty to its depths. No external law, he insists, can set free the inner man. But the great revelation of God in Christ can call out supreme trust and love, can appeal at once to the inmost in man. Only a great trust can thus profoundly call us out, we getting such a vision of the fatherly will of God in Christ that we can but trust Him, and God so trusting us that we cannot be unworthy of that trust. Such a trust or faith is bound to "work"; it will *out*; it cannot help expressing itself in a reflection of the great personality that has aroused it to such trust and love;—"faith working through love," inevitably express-

ing its love to God in a sharing in His life of self-giving love for men. Such a love has the very essence of all true law in itself. It fulfills all law. Such a faith, just because it springs from within and works through love, will be free and spontaneous, all its outer conduct prompted by an inner spirit. Liberty here insures law.

How surely this must follow on any true conception of Christianity; how surely the grace of God in Christ carries one on to a life like God's own; how surely the freedom of religion insures an ethical life, can be very briefly put from various angles.

In the first place, the Christian is a learner of Christ, and hence of course makes the ideal of Christ's life that of his own.

Or, the religious man seeks above all, in the very passion of his religious desire, to share in the life of God Himself, and the God whom Christ reveals is in His very essence self-giving love. One cannot share that life and not give himself in loving service to men.

Naturally, therefore, and again, the New Testament came to conceive of a truly ethical life as the inevitable *fruit* of the religious acceptance of Christ. Or, as James puts it, the inner spirit is conceived as a fountain out of which all external expression comes.

Or, through a deeper conception of law, as we have seen, God's law is felt to be only a loving hint of the line of life for us; the ethical command itself, therefore, becoming a revelation of the love of God, so that we see that in obeying the ethical command we are simply following the laws of life into a steadily enlarging life.

IV. This conception is so true to Christ's own thought of the will of God as a Father's will, as well as to that of James and Paul, and to that of the scientific conception of law, that we shall do well to try to think it through a little further, and see its relation to other theories of life.

A large part of the appeal of selfish pleasure, for example, lies in its seeming promise of larger liberty, of further life. "I want to do as I

like"; "I want to see life," the pleasure-seeker urges. "Live while you live," he exhorts. And even the lowest selfish sense pleasures do afford some emotional experiences, that give temporarily a new sense of freedom and elation and interest, and so some seeming immediate extension of life. Now men have a right to expect from life freedom and interest and enlargement. And this natural cry of the pleasure-seeker shows that contenders for the ideal may not lightly surrender Christ's idea of religion as giving abundant life, but must steadily insist on a conception of goodness that can be permanently interesting. One cannot hope to succeed in constantly whipping his soul back from all that he counts of interest and of real value. Men need at this point constant enlightenment. No virtue is safe that is not both intelligent and militant.

And the clear-sighted man has now come to see that to think of moral laws as hindrances to liberty and life is a great mistake. He now conceives them rather as formulating the outcome of the experience of the

race. They state, that is, the ways in which we can best satisfy the whole man, the ways in which we get the most out of these natures of ours, the ways in which our beings were meant to act. To refuse to obey such laws written in our constitutions is as absurd as it would be to refuse to obey the directions of the manufacturer for the running of a superb automobile. The directions are not to hamper us, but to enable us to get the utmost out of our machine. Only a fool would ignore them and pride himself meanwhile on his liberty. In fact, one gets no real liberty in the use of a machine, until its laws have become like inner laws for him, and it is second nature and automatic for him to obey them. It is exactly so concerning the laws of our bodies and minds. If we ignore the fact that we are made for action, for heroic achievement, for fine personal relations, we shall thereby gain neither freedom nor larger life, but make, rather, the largest life impossible to us. When men so act, they are turning back to lower and corrupt ends, to ends abandoned in the upreaching of the race.

Indeed, religion itself is probably rightly conceived as growing out of men's constantly extending claim on life, men's persistent refusal to be satisfied with the finite. "Nothing," says Johanna Ambrosius, "is so insatiable as the human heart. If it has enough to eat and drink, it longs for costly vessels for the food to be served in, and once it possesses these it would ask for the blue heavens as a tablecloth." Men have unquenchable thirsts for extending experience, for permanent outlooks and hopes; for constantly enlarging life, in a word, for love;—thirsts that God alone can satisfy. The highest law and the largest liberty here again come together. The constant seeming antinomy between pleasure and duty, between the religious and the irreligious life, and the frequent feeling that duty and religion limit rather than enlarge life, are, consequently, usually due to false conceptions both of happiness and of religion.

On the one hand, the pleasure-seeker is usually thinking of an immediate and partial and selfish satisfaction; forgetting the "long run,"

forgetting the whole personality, and forgetting all others. And the fleeting, unsatisfying nature of much that is called pleasure, and sought as such, is so explained. "Man shall not live by bread alone." In the first place, he is a creature of memory and anticipation; he cannot live simply in the immediate pleasure of the passing moment. In the second place, he is a creature not of appetites only, but of imagination, and reason and conscience; he has his whole nature always to reckon with. In the third place, his life is knit up indissolubly with other lives; they are part and parcel of himself. He is so made. He cannot, therefore, think simply of himself and have largeness of life. In all these ways a false conception of happiness misleads. The deceptive nature of alcohol, as shown under the cold analysis of scientific experiment, precisely illustrates the misleading nature of the appeal of the immediate and partial and selfish pleasure.

On the other hand, the claim of the moral and religious life may also be misconceived. Sometimes, with a

false asceticism, it is made to deny the body's legitimate place. Sometimes its goodness is conceived only negatively and legalistically, and so robbed of interest and spontaneity, as a mere emptying of life, or a hard, disagreeable and useless task arbitrarily imposed. But such a conception has nothing to do with Christ's thought of a steadily advancing, intelligent and unselfish entrance into the loving will of God for all men. That carries with it all great causes, all high ideals, all inspiring devotions and enthusiasms, and alone holds the promise of a permanently satisfying life.

V. How urgently our own time is demanding that we rethink this whole problem of liberty and law, violently opposed tendencies show.

On the one hand there is the host of reformers who are seeking to write into law all kinds of imaginable human gains, forgetting too often the imperative necessity, if civilization is really to advance, that men be brought to an inner choice of all real goods. For it is well to remember, as President Hadley puts it, that

"it is easier to pass a radical measure that is going to be evaded than to secure obedience to a conservative one." All of us need to take deeply to heart that advanced legislation is in itself no proof of progress, if there do not accompany it willingness to obey the law that expresses the higher ideal. We are not to forget that democracy is no mere matter of form of government or kinds of legislation; but that democracy goes forward in just the proportion in which self-discipline accompanies it, as Dr. Jacks so incisively reminds us:

"The central problem of democracy is the problem of educating the citizen. This, indeed, is a commonplace; but there is reason to think that the kind of education required by the citizen, whether as subject or legislator, to qualify him for the new part he has to play, has not been sufficiently considered. What he needs is not merely instruction in political science. He does need that; but he needs something else far more; something without which all the political science in the world will carry him but a little way. *He must learn to obey*: and the lesson will be all

the more difficult for him to learn because hitherto democracy has been too closely associated with the spirit which prompts him to seek escape from authority. Of all modern democratic governments, with scarcely one exception, it may be said that they were conceived in disobedience and born in rebellion. Their watchword has ever been 'liberty'; but 'liberty' interpreted in a sense which has obscured its sterner implications. But now that democracy has taken up the task of social reform those sterner implications are coming into view. None but a thoroughly disciplined community can effectually deal, through its Government, with social reform. The idea, too prevalent in certain quarters, that the restraints of social reform will fall exclusively on the rich, the idle, the privileged, is a fond illusion. Every man of us will be put under restraints such as we have never dreamed of; such as few men have ever asked themselves whether they were willing, or even able to bear. It is well that we should all realize this truth—for it is irrefutable—as we listen to the daring programmes and the glowing promises of political orators."

We must learn to obey. We must gird ourselves for that increasing self-discipline, that is demanded by advancing social aims.

As opposed to these who are seeking to write all reform into law, and are satisfied therewith, stand the violent emancipators of various classes, like the syndicalists and the militant suffragettes, who imagine that force of itself can bring emancipation to their respective classes. Let it be perfectly clear here that there is much of injustice to protest against. It cannot be justly claimed that women have a fair representation in organized society today. It cannot be justly claimed that industrial workers in general are fairly sharing in the joint product of labor and capital. The shameless record of the mining corporations of Colorado, in the debauching of all the forces of law and justice, is but one piece of evidence. How certainly the selfish lawlessness of the capitalistic class fruits either in the selfish lawlessness of other classes, or in the determination to bring all business under state control, is witnessed by

the conservative *Railway Age-Gazette*: "The real leaders of Socialism in this country are such men as Charles S. Mellen, B. F. Yoakum, and the directors of the New Haven, Frisco and other roads who are too crooked, cowardly, indolent or incapable to perform the duties of their positions." Nevertheless, selfish force cannot bring the emancipation of any class. Not even if they could be certainly successful in the use of force, could the emancipation so come. We are learning that the unspeakable folly of war is that it settles nothing; that after all the fighting is over, the real solution must be reached in other more rational ways. Let the Balkans bear witness: intolerable slaughter and suicide of nations, and absolutely nothing of value accomplished! Any cause is safe in just the degree in which it has really won the conviction of men. The real victory of a cause, therefore, absolutely requires education, persuasion, and the free choosing of the new goal. The forced victory, even if possible, thus, is a cheap and insecure victory; the more fundamental and difficult task still re-

mains. A selfish, lawless class victory, that willingly ignores all other human interests, just because it is selfish and lawless, cannot abide. "Nothing is settled until it is settled right," is still good doctrine, and more clear now than ever. These causes of the syndicalist and of the militant suffragette complain, not without justification, as we have seen, that society is not doing them justice. But will treacherous use of force remedy that? Can men counsel and practice treachery and violence and spread this disease through society, and reap the fruit of loyalty and fair dealing, and not rather make society itself impossible? Syndicalism is seeking to remedy the selfish lawlessness of the capitalistic class by a like selfish lawlessness on the part of the working class. It is the old fallacy of lynch law. Outrage of humanity cannot be cured by further outrage. Militant suffragism is seeking to win long delayed justice in giving women a fair share in government, by a selfish lawlessness that would set all government at naught. It has not observed even the decencies of civilized

warfare. It is using mob violence and it is increasingly provoking mob violence. Democracy, we may not forget, means not only *self-government* but *self-government*. Those who are to share in that may not appeal to the mob. Nothing is so terrible in human society as fundamental lawlessness, and it was, therefore, that Kant, who was no believer in character laid on from without, still felt compelled to say: "If law ceases, all worth of human life on earth ceases too." Set your face like a flint against selfish lawlessness for any cause.

And it is in this same direction that we are to look for the fallacy of "free lovers" of all sorts, who find in the strength of uncontrolled passion its own excuse for being. Their doctrine is having, just now, a strange recrudescence, and they would fain persuade men that the race has, so far, learned nothing concerning the relations of the sexes. That there are many difficult questions here; that our conventions have not all been justified; that there have been some strong moral grounds for the extension of divorce; that much that has

been written of a revolutionary character has been written in moral earnestness; that some relations classed legitimate are really less justified, in the sight of God, than some counted illegitimate—all this need not be questioned.

But, on the one hand, where a real ideal has been seriously set up, as by Mrs. Key, for example, it is an ideal much more tenuous and more difficult of realization both by the individual and by society, and hence less practicable, and it is fraught with many dubious consequences that make the ideal itself exceedingly doubtful. It is very difficult to believe that such theories do justice either to the sober lessons of evolution, or to the experience of the race in marriage. When one prominent Feminist can say,—“Personally I am inclined to believe that the ultimate aim of Feminism with regard to marriage is the practical suppression of marriage and the institution of free alliance,”—one cannot help feeling that there is here disclosed a bland indifference both to experience and to one whole side of the paradox of liberty and

law. The race will wisely go slow in giving to wild speculation so great weight in the most important moral questions. Marriage will fail, just as any other institution will fail, when men bring to it, only selfish passion. That is a failure, in truth, however, not of an institution, but of men.

But for the most part, these free lovers are not truly concerned with great moral ideals at all. They are thinking of selfish pleasure, and chafe under any permanent obligations. They simply are not willing to pay their part of the price of a decent civilization. And they are pointing to the old, easy, often traveled road of selfish indulgence, allowing to impulse supreme control, whatever this may cost someone else. It would be pathetic, if it were not so shameful and so self-contradictory, to see how these lauders of passion persuade themselves with each new relation that here is a real affinity, here one may find ideals realized, here vow eternal fealty, such as they have just belied in utter treachery in another relation. The very fact that they cannot get away from such idealizing

shows how surely any love, that is to be at all satisfying even to a selfish soul, must be thought of as having abiding loyalty. And so long as cause and effect exist in the moral world, treachery, we may be sure, cannot yield the fruit of loyalty, and fine human relations cannot be built up out of a series of infidelities. Hateful, mean, selfish treachery—that is what these free lovers are trying to gild. The truth is, that such lives surrender the helm of will to feeling, and give up in these relations moral values altogether. And this is finally to prove traitors to the race's task of an even tolerable civilization.

The careless indifference, too, with which entire classes of society, in their devotion to the pleasure of "week ends," are willing to jeopardize the whole great institution of the Sabbath, is simply another illustration of selfish lawlessness. One needs to be no ascetic to see that the conversion of our Sundays into simple pleasure seeking, however innocent in itself, is an immense loss to all the deeper forces that go to the making of any civilization deserving the

name. College men and women, at least, may be asked to do thinking enough not heedlessly to barter one of the great spiritual achievements of the race for a couple of days of house parties and auto riding and golf. Are we going to lose all sense of proportionate values?

The weekly harvest of death through auto speeding, the like perpetual sacrifice of life and limb and childhood through preventable accidents and bad industrial conditions, the reputation of American tourists in Europe as souvenir thieves, the shameless way in which supposed respectable people display their thefts from hotels and other sources, the frequent heedless disregard of others' rights to property and to quiet by so highly privileged a class as college students—these are all alike symptoms of the old and new disease of selfish lawlessness.

As civilization goes forward it becomes, like the evolution of animal life, more and more complex and delicate in its adjustments. The forces employed, too, are increasingly powerful. The ability of the selfish law-

lessness of a few to work widespread discomfort and disaster is thereby steadily increased, and the demand for individual self-control in the same measure enlarged. How a whole nation can be terrorized by the selfish lawlessness of a few is being demonstrated today in Great Britain. One selfish boy and paint pot can give discomfort to a community for months and even years. A few students regardless of the property rights of surrounding communities may seriously diminish the privileges of an entire student body and blacken their reputation.

Selfish self-will in any realm, let us be sure, is no true liberty; rather is it a sure road to cutting short our largest liberties. We must rather be able to say with Goethe: "I learned that the unspeakable value of true freedom consisted not in doing what we please, or all that circumstances allow, but in the power of doing at once and without restraint whatever we consider right."

VI. And this true freedom the New Testament not only clearly conceives, but it points the one eternal

way to reach it. Religion itself remains,—what Professor James called it,—the one great unlocker of men's powers,—the one great emancipator of the human soul. Our absolute human dependence still bears witness, how inevitably we are made for God, how certainly we need to become "partakers of the divine nature," if we are to fulfill the purpose of our creation. As surely as man is made capable of religion, so surely is the largest life not possible to him until he opens his being to the tides of the divine life, to the in-working of the Spirit of God. The New Testament emphasis, therefore, upon the doctrine of the Spirit, is an inevitable emphasis. And the so-called "new thought" of our time is only a less rational putting of the sense of our absolute dependence on the Spirit of God. That the New Testament should insist that we are to be born of the Spirit, that we are to walk in the Spirit, that we are to have in us the witness of the Spirit, means, not that there is the magical application to us of some thing or patent process, but the bringing in

of a great new personal relation that becomes the source of all else in life,—a new force, a new capacity, a new hope. And this new force of life counterworks the forces of death. In the moral as in the physical life, the only real protection against disease and decay is abounding life. And in the light of the doctrine of the Spirit, God's free forgiveness is seen to mean, not the magical setting aside of the consequences of our evil choosing, but the counter-working of those consequences by a new tide of life with its own consequences of further life.

It is only to put the same great method of life in slightly different form, when it is insisted, with Paul and with Drummond, that men's greatest need is persistent association with Christ. And it is no outworn way of life, which is so suggested even to the man of the twentieth century. For that simply means that acquaintance with God, as with any other person, must be obtained through his greatest and most significant self-manifestation. It is because men have felt that they found

just this in Christ that he has come to have for them such supreme significance. "That this is a real experience and not a vision," says Professor Drummond, "that this life is possible to men, is being lived by men today, is simple biographical fact. From a thousand witnesses I cannot forbear to summon one. The following are the words of one of the highest intellects this age has known, a man who shared the burdens of his country as few have done, and who, not in the shadows of old age, but in the high noon of his success, gave this confession to the world: 'I want to speak tonight only a little, but that little I desire to speak of the sacred name of Christ, who is my life, my inspiration, my hope, and my surety. I cannot help stopping and looking back upon the past. And I wish, as if I had never done it before, to bear witness, not only that it is by the grace of God, but that it is by the grace of God as manifested in Christ Jesus, that I am what I am. I recognize the sublimity and grandeur of the revelation of God in His eternal fatherhood as one that made the

heavens, that founded the earth, and that regards all the tribes of the earth, comprehending them in one universal mercy; but it is the God that is manifested in Jesus Christ, revealed by His life, made known by the inflections of His feelings, by His discourse, and by His deeds—it is that God that I desire to confess to-night, and of whom I desire to say, “By the love of God in Christ Jesus I am what I am.” In looking back upon my experience, that part of my life which stands out, and which I remember most vividly, is just that part that has had some conscious association with Christ. All the rest is pale, and thin, and lies like clouds on the horizon. Doctrines, systems, measures, methods—what may be called the necessary mechanical and external part of worship; the part which the senses would recognize—this seems to have withered and fallen off like leaves of last summer; but that part which has taken hold of Christ abides.’

“Can anyone hear this life-music,” Professor Drummond adds, “with its throbbing refrain of Christ, and re-

main unmoved by envy or desire? Yet, till we have lived like this we have never lived at all."

In such a vital personal relation to God, through His great self-revelation in Christ, the free grace of religion becomes the natural root of law-abiding character. For only so does the personal fully replace the legal; only so does solid hope come in; only so, satisfying freedom and a permanently enlarging life. For as soon as the moral command is seen to be the loving father's will for his children, so soon it is seen to be in itself not only a promise of life, but a way of life, and law and liberty are forever reconciled.

Members of the Graduating Classes:

My theme today has been rather forced upon me. The circumstances of our time seemed to demand it. For you are going out into a world of unusually disturbed standards and values; though it really holds no problem essentially new. You will be vehemently urged to take various one-sided positions, as though a to-

tally new light had just dawned on the world.

But in this fundamental paradox which we have been today considering, you cannot be true even to your college education, and be one-sided. For you have learned, we may hope, the psychological necessity of both self-assertion and self-surrender. You have learned the scientific lesson of victory and liberty through insight into law and obedience to it. You have learned the historic lesson of the constant necessity of both historic continuity and readjustment. You have learned the esthetic lesson that even Art, that seems the freest expression of the human spirit, has its inevitable element of self-restraint.

Therefore, for your individual lives, do not, on the one hand, lose law out of your life. You do not want to make your life a chaos but a cosmos. On the other hand, do not lose freedom out of your life, the freedom of children of God, the freedom of self-realization, the freedom of utter truth to your own individuality and to your own highest vision. Be true. Be free. And you will be both true

and free if, in the spirit of Jesus, you do always and only what a genuine, all-inclusive love requires. Let him set you free.

In the task of social reconstruction, too, that is pressing in upon your generation, you cannot evade the double demand of the law of liberty.

On the one hand, social life cannot advance, nor even exist, in a lawless world. Your task on this side will be three-fold: to help to make it steadily more true, first, that the laws of your community and state and nation are just and righteous laws, which do not count things more sacred than persons, which allow for the necessary constant adjustments to changing conditions, and which so deserve the support of all good men; second, that by the patient and persistent processes of education and moral enlightenment, the principles embodied in the laws are enthroned in the reason and conscience of the community; and third, that so there may not fail that steady self-discipline and free self-control and obedience which can alone make laws of any final avail.

On the other hand, social life is not worth living without freedom. At the foundation of all rational society, therefore, there must be basic reverence for the individual personality—respect for his liberty and for the sanctity of his inner person. But the enormities of unrestrained selfishness have been so many; and the frightful effects of vast inequalities in material conditions so plain, that it now seems certain that society has before it a series of attempts inordinately to regulate the individual, which are certain to provoke in turn a reaction to an equally exaggerated liberty. But neither extreme should shut your eyes to the fact that you cannot make a life worth living without freedom; and that, as Hobhouse puts it, “the true opposition is between the control that cramps the personal life and the spiritual order, and the control that is aimed at securing the external and material conditions of their free and unimpeded development”; and with clear discrimination you must fight the first kind of control, and stand for the

second. Only so can the largest liberty come.

In these deeper questions of the personal and social life rules cannot be given. Principles alone avail. Just how, in the perplexing individual situations which you are to confront, these principles are to be applied I cannot tell you, and I would not if I could. For your own growth and enlargement are themselves to be found in the solving and re-solving of this perpetual paradox of human life—the paradox of liberty and law. May God help you to be so true to the light, that, whatever the external success of your lives may be, you cannot fail in the inner victory. “For ye were called for freedom; only use not freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another.”





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